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How to Destroy a River and Create an Environmental Catastrophe in One Fell Swoop

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*The **St Louis River of Northern Minnesota** will be as Vulnerable to Annihilation as were **Brazil's Rio Doce and Paraobeba Rivers** (pictured below) – if the PolyMet Project is Allowed to Proceed*

(Trying to understand why every Brazilian mining catastrophe has been blacked-out by the Duluth News-Tribune)

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The photos and videos in this supplemental Duty to Warn column need to be viewed by everybody living downstream from the proposed PolyMet mine tailings lagoon – scheduled to be built near **Hoyt Lakes, Minnesota, a St Louis River river-town in northeast Minnesota.** Hoyt Lakes is the northernmost of the 12 river towns on the St Louis River estuary which empties into Lake Superior, the least polluted of the Great Lakes. **Superior is the largest freshwater lake in the world (by surface area) and it contains 10% of the entire world's remaining fresh water.**

Tens of thousands of people live and fish and harvest wild rice and depend on the fresh water that is provided by the St Louis River estuary. If what happened to the permanently polluted river in Brazil a week ago happens to the proposed PolyMet tailings lagoon, **those 12 towns and their people will be severely – and permanently – impacted**. Some of the towns may be destroyed and unknown numbers of people will be drowned, injured or displaced.

As has been described many times in Duluth's alternative news-weekly paper (the Duluth Reader but, significantly, NEVER by the Duluth News-Tribune earthen-walled tailings lagoon dams always leak but many of them totally collapse with devastating results. (Please study the photos below and be certain to click on the links to the 5 important videos below to fully understand why the PolyMet dam is so dangerous and cannot be allowed to be built.

Last week's column carried a lot of text and so only there was only enough room for 4 photos,. and they were necessarily too small to be appropriately impactful. Therefore this week's column will consist of less text and more images that should alarm even the most unenlightened pro-copper mining legislator, the co-opted DNR/PCA bureaucrats that have been granting PolyMet every permit they have asked for up until the Brazil catastrophe and every other copper mining advocate that has been intentionally deceived by PolyMet regarding the lethal dangers of soluble earthen wall dams that are supposed to – but can

never – hold back toxic, highly acidic sulfide slurry for eternity. Disaster in some form or another is inevitable, and the river towns have not been warned.

Many environmentally-conscious folks here in Minnesota's northland have been ashamed of our regional media outlets (especially the Duluth News-Tribune and the local media affiliates of CBS. NBC, ABC, PBS. NPR, MPR and WPR) as they have been black-listing the news of the recent disaster in Brazil's mining country. Nobody that I know can think of any reportage of the 2014 copper mine disaster in British Columbia or the 2015 disaster in Brazil either.

The obviously intentional total lack of coverage of what happened to Brazil's "PolyMet-style" earthen dam-walled tailings lagoons must at least be considered unethical and could even be considered criminal. One hopes that there will be some sort of explanation and apology in the future for their intentional lack of coverage. There surely are ulterior motives involved in the decisions to black-list what every other news outlet in the world has deemed urgently newsworthy.

These news outlets – if they have any honor at all – surely should be apologizing and asking for forgiveness from the dozen river towns that rely on those media outlets to keep them informed about lethal threats to their river (and our great lake!).

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1. A 5 minute video of the 1-25-2019 Brazilian mine waste earthen dam disaster – the day after. Note a few of the surviving mine workers at 1:30; the destroyed high railroad bridge and torn RR tracks at 2 minutes; the doomed emaciated bull stuck in the mud at 3 minutes; the totaled mining company structures at 4 minutes; the CAT stuck in the mud at 4:20; the crumpled boxcars and destroyed train tracks at 5 minutes; and the partially-emptied tailings lagoon at the end.

2. This 5-minute video shows the first horrifying minute of the 1-25-2019 Brazilian earthen dam collapse.

3. A 6-minute video of the 11-15-2015 Samarco mine disaster which includes a very informative computer simulation of the disaster.

4. The first 6 minutes of this 25-minute video by Al Jazeera about the 2015 Samarco mine disaster shows the aftermath of the event 8 months later. The disaster displaced 6,000 residents of downstream villages.

5. A 5-minute-long video of what happens when earthen dams liquify and burst.

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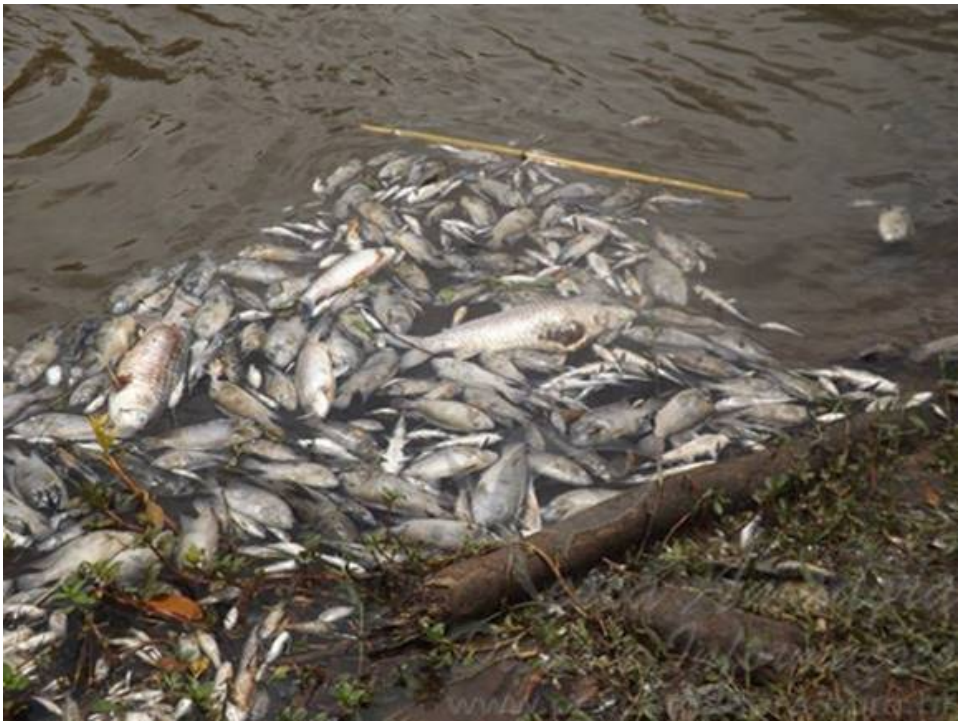
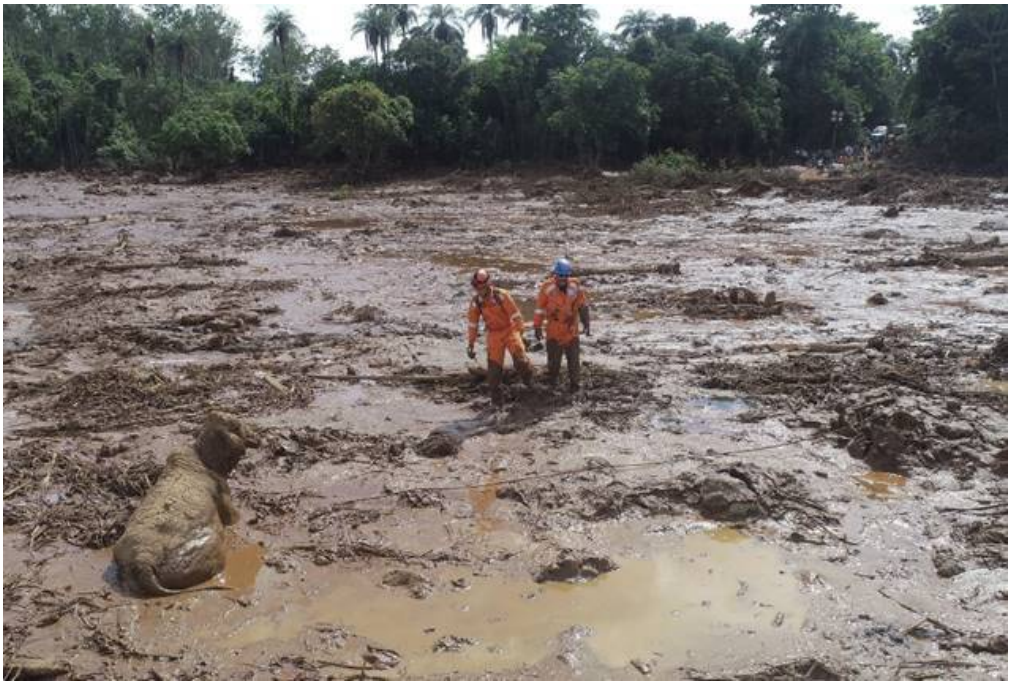
Futilely digging and searching for the missing bodies of mine employees and others buried in the sludge after the earthen tailings dam dissolved and destroyed everything downstream. This shows what was once a relatively narrow river.

Fish cannot survive such catastrophes, especially if highly toxic mine waste is involved.

More casualties of the breach.



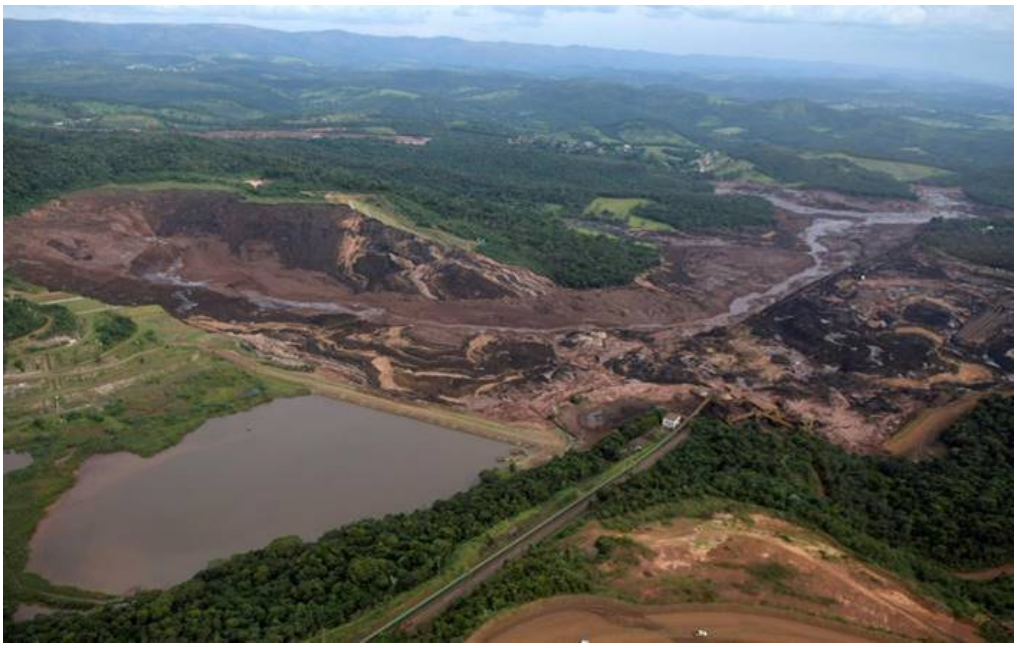
More dead fish – died of asphyxiation. Any fish that managed to survive will be inedible due to ingested poison.



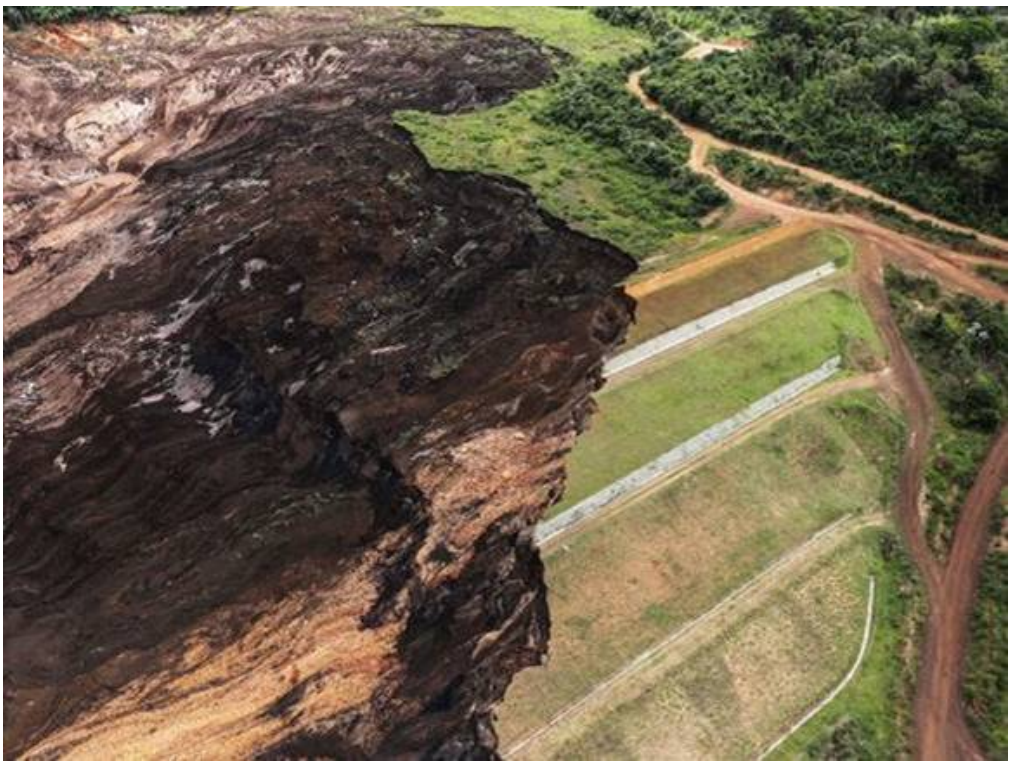
Farm animals didn’t fare well either. This animal survived but is still doomed.

Exhausted rescue workers.

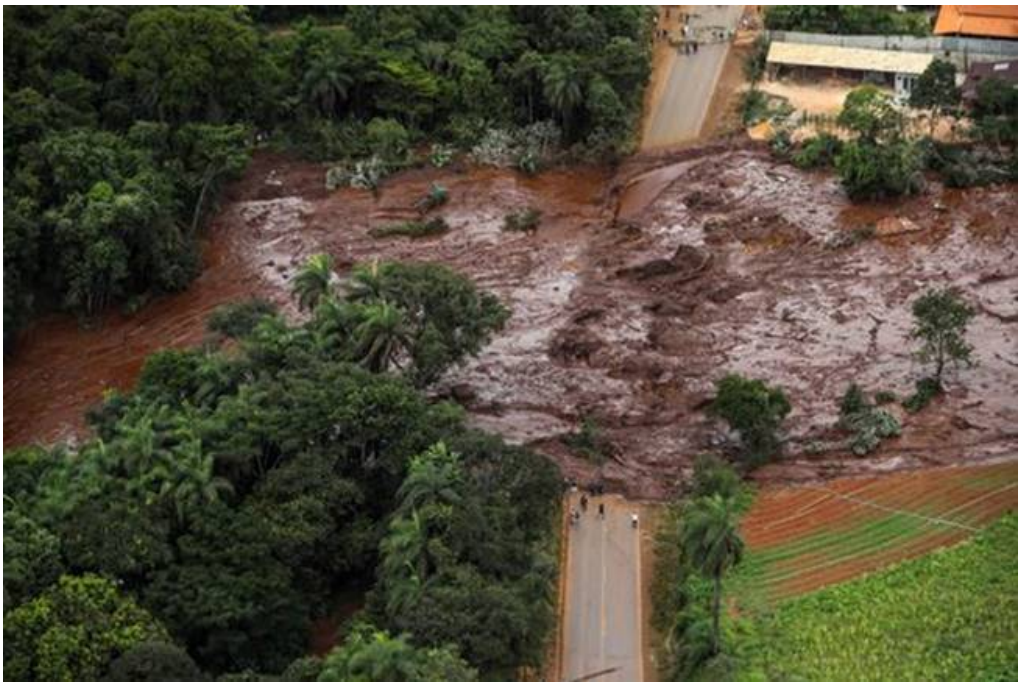
Rescue workers futilely searching for bodies buried in the soon-to-harden sludge. Note the worker to the left unable to escape from his waist-deep predicament.



An overview of the massive partially emptied-out tailings lagoon (upper left). Note the slightly smaller, still-intact, water/sludge-filled tailings lagoon (lower left). The downstream devastation is represented in of the photo

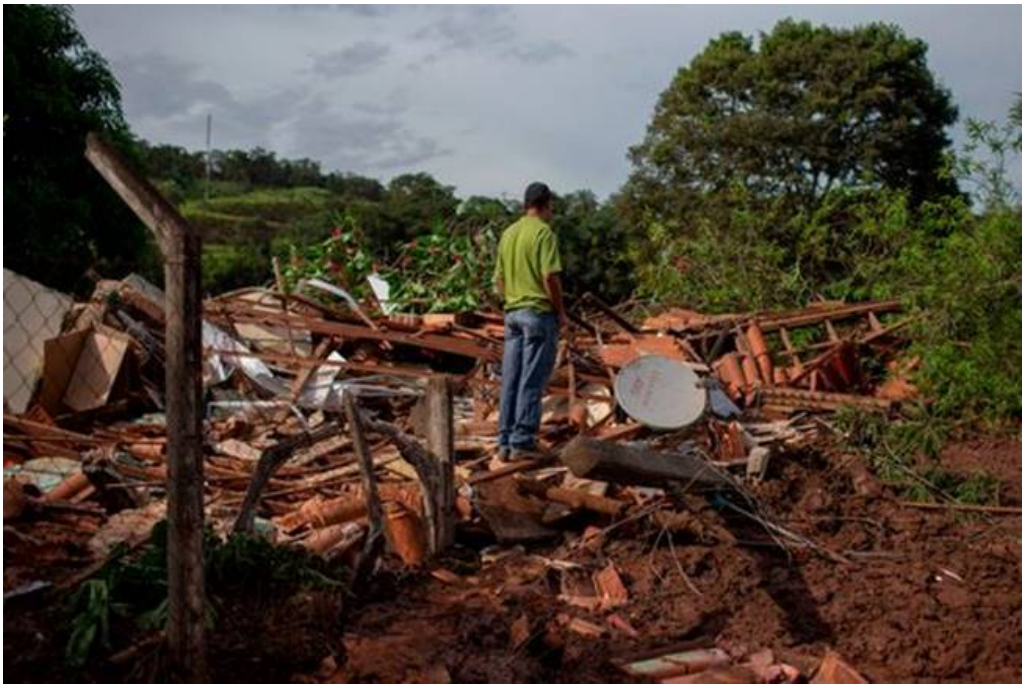


What’s left of the upper section of the massive tailings lagoon after it liquified and collapsed

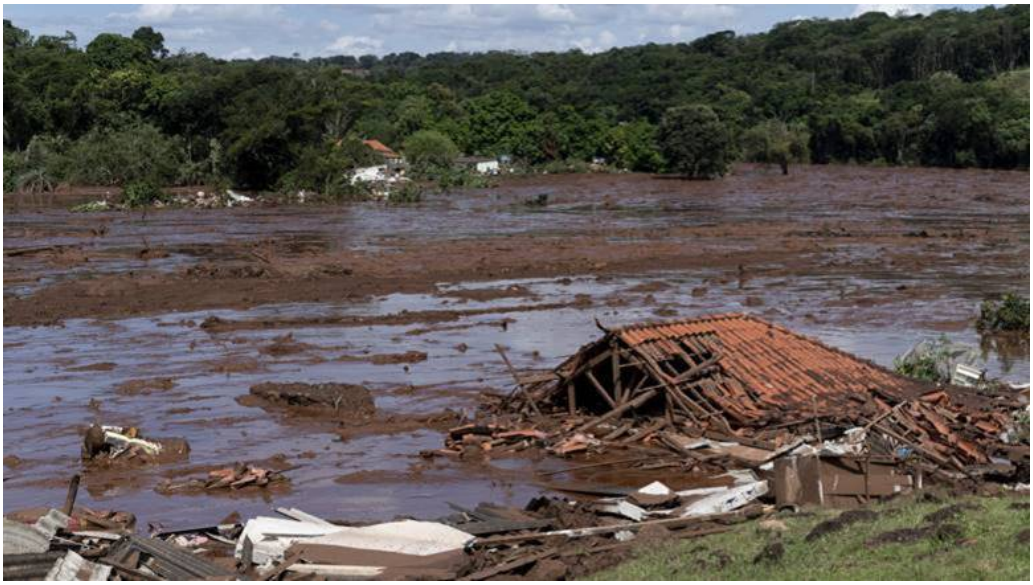


Toxic sludge overflowing a highway farther downstream. Note the damaged farm field (lower right)

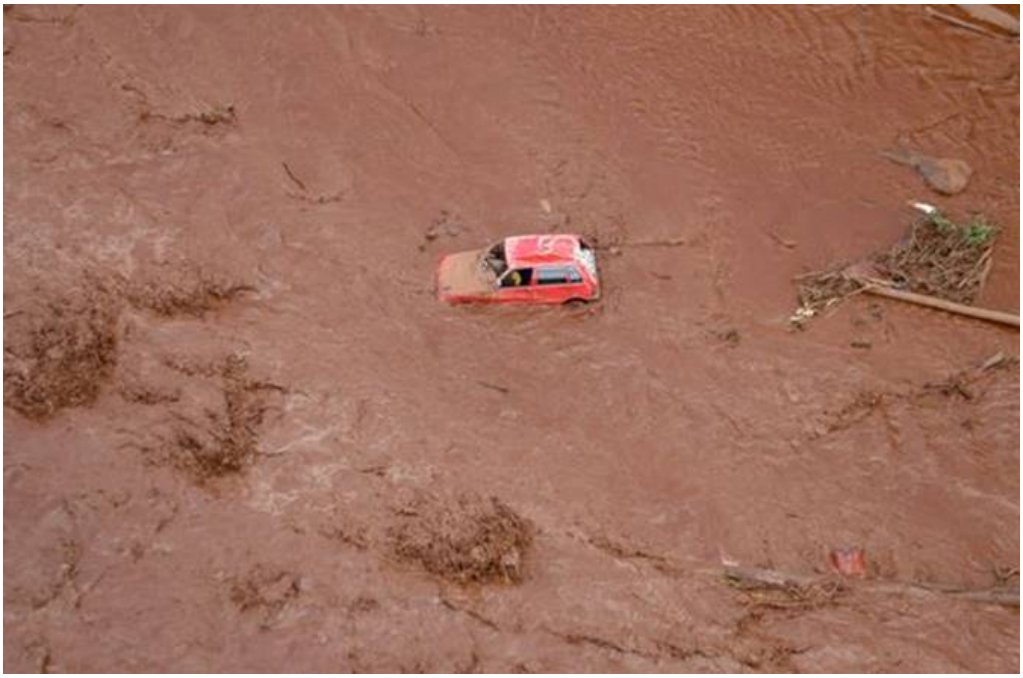
What’s left of the Vale mining company’s administrative buildings, its processing plant and assorted missing company structures, including the cafeteria and the barracks where hundreds of miners were once housed



Destroyed downstream home

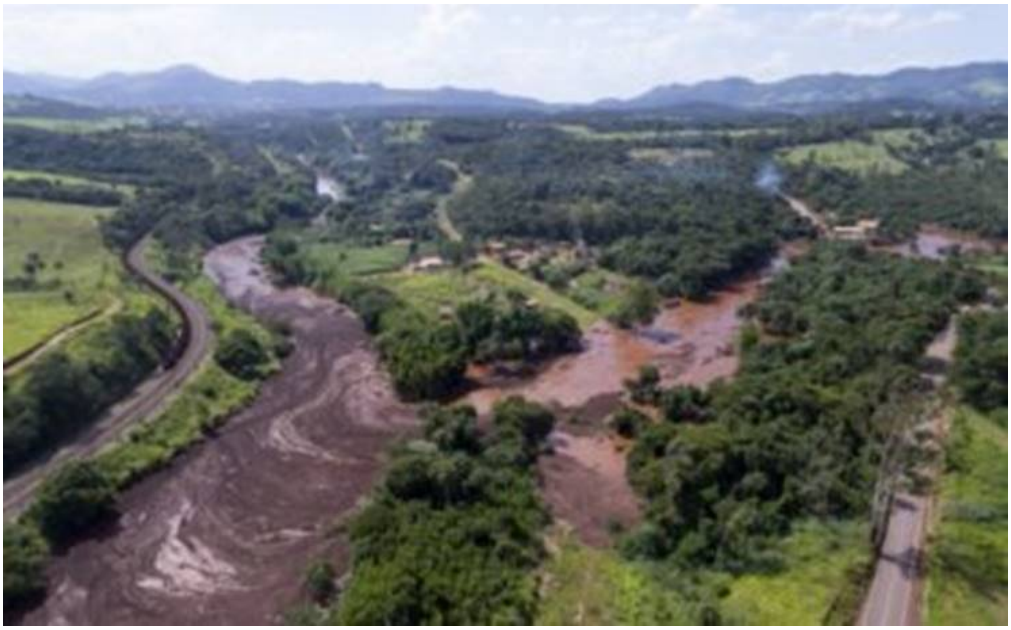


A sludge-demolished river-town home lies in ruins after the dam failure



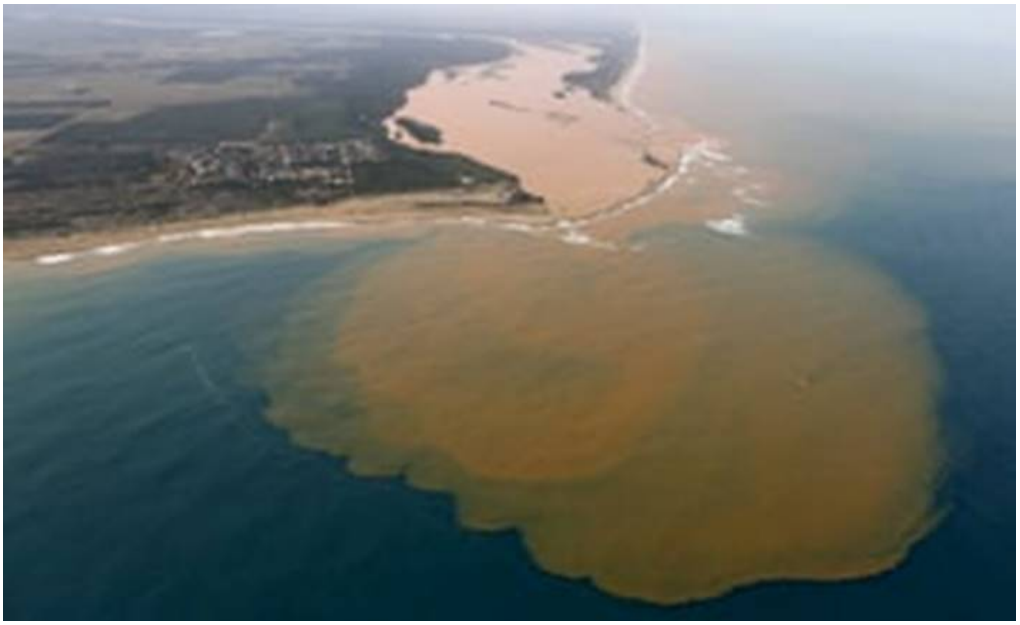
Doomed vehicle soon to be entrapped when the toxic sludge dries into a brick-like consistency

The kitchen of a river town home. The water is poisonous.

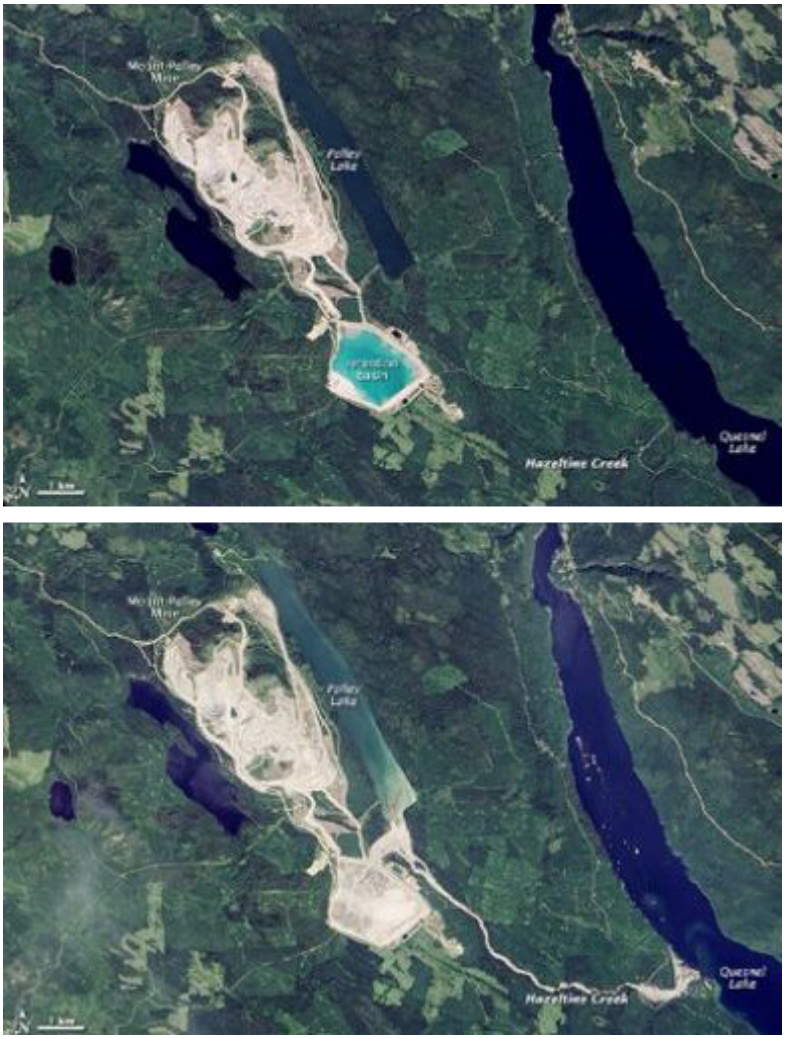


Downstream from the tailings dam. Note the tributary to the right that flows into the main river was heavily contaminated when the flow reversed.

The open pit mine at Brumadinho, Brazil as it appeared in 2008. The waste generated at this mine was stored in nearby tailings lagoons, two of which burst on Jan 25, 2019 after 4 years of dormancy.



The mine waste-contaminated Atlantic Ocean (poisoned by mercur, arsenic, etc) at the mouth of Brazil's Rio Doce, once a healthy fishery, as it entered the Atlantic Ocean days after the breach. The river and the ocean area both remain polluted after 3 years. (This is what could happen to the St Louis River and Lake Superior if the proposed PolyMet tailings lagoon collapsed for any reason (including heavy rain deluge, over-topping, liquification, earthquake or quiver, etc.)



Before and after satellite photos of the Mount Polley copper mine area 2014. Note that in the lower photo the tailings lagoon is empty, the 6 foot wide Hazeltine Creek is visible from space, the freshly-poisoned Polley Lake is no longer dark blue and there is floating debris in Quesnel Lake that is visible from space!

Aerial view of the 100 foot-tall earthen dam-wall of the Mount Polley gold and copper mine tailings lagoon after it dissolved in 2014 and spewed highly toxic sludge into Lake Quesnel, a world-famous

salmon and trout fishery. The narrow, tree-lined Hazeltine Creek that emptied into the lake was 6 feet wide at its widest prior to the catastrophe (which was the worst environmental disaster in the history of British Columbia) Thousands of downstream trees were up-rooted and wound up in the lake, which empties into the Fraser River and ultimately into the Pacific Ocean. PolyMet's tailings dam is projected to reach 250 feet in height.

A photo taken 18 years after a 1974 tailings dam ruptured in Australia. Any humans or animals that are buried in such disasters can never be expected to be recovered in the dried, brick-like residue.

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Since his retirement from his holistic mental health practice, ***Dr Kohls*** *has been writing the weekly Duty to Warn column for the Duluth Reader, Minnesota's premier alternative newsweekly magazine. His columns, which have been re-published all around the world for the last decade, deal with a variety of justice issues, including the dangers of copper/nickel sulfide mining in water-rich northeast Minnesota and the realities of pro-corporate "Friendly" Fascism in America, militarism, racism, malnutrition, Big Pharma's over-drugging, Big Vaccine's over-vaccinating, Big Medicine's over-screening and over-treating agendas, as well as other movements that threaten human health, the environment, democracy, civility and the sustainability of the planet and the populace. Many of his columns have been archived at a number of websites, including the following four:*

http://duluthreader.com/search?search_term=Duty+to+Warn&p=2;

http://www.globalresearch.ca/author/gary-g-kohls;

http://freepress.org/geographic-scope/national; and

https://www.transcend.org/tms/search/?q=gary+kohls+articles

All images in this article are from the author

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